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ABSTRACT

Each of 15 first-year graduate students in Clinical Psychology enrolled in a criterion-referenced self-training course on clinical interviewing received either immediate or delayed feedback on their performance in simulated interviews. The immediate feedback groups (IF, two triads) practiced the requisite skills for each module with the continuous feedback of an advanced graduate student monitor during the first 90 minutes of training. Following this, and continuing practice if necessary, the triad videotaped each other demonstrating the skills. The delayed feedback groups (DF, three triads) trained each other, practiced, and videotaped prior to feedback from their monitors. The DF triads met with their monitors within the next week for 90 minutes to receive feedback on their completed videotapes. Probe interviews were required to complete a module evaluation form following each session with a monitor. Performance and improvement ratings of all groups was comparable throughout the semester, but the students in the IF groups spent only slightly more than half of the time expended by those in the DF groups. Further, the IF groups expressed significantly greater satisfaction with both monitors and the individual modules than did the DF groups. (Author)

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Teaching Interviewing Skills: Immediate Versus Delayed Feedback

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Feedback has been shown to facilitate learning, and immediate feedback has repeatedly been shown to be more efficacious than delayed feedback in producing behavior change. These priciples, however, have traditionally been ignored in the teaching of interviewing skills. In the typical training situation, feedback to the student is delayed. Usually, the student audio- or videotapes an interview or simulated interview which is later reviewed by his/her supervisor. The present study investigated the effects of immediate versus delayed feedback on the acquisition of behaviors comprising basic interviewing skills. The training materials included the self-instructional text developed by Hackney and Nye (1973) which was implemented in a criterion referenced self-training course on clinical interviewing (Couture & Edelstein, 1977). It was proposed that immediate feedback would produce more unit behavior change than delayed feedback, and that immediate feedback would be more cost-effective in terms of student time.

Method

Five triads of first-year clinical psychology graduate students each met with an advanced graduate student "monitor" once per week for one and one half hours. The monitor was responsible for providing students with feedback on their performance on each of nine interviewing skill modules. The modules consisted of criterion referenced, self-instructional material which was used by each triad to train the members in the skills covered in the module. The immediate feedback groups

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(two triads) practiced practiced the interviewing skills for each module with the continuous feedback of a monitor during the first one and one half hours of triad training. Following this period, the triad continued to practice if necessary, and then videotaped each other demonstrating the criterion skills for each module. The delayed feedback group (three triads) trained each other, practiced, and videotaped with no feedback from their monitors. These triads then met with their monitors for one and one half hours, and were given feedback on their completed videotaped performances. These feedback sessions occurred at least one day after taping, and prior to taping the next module. Any student who failed to reach criterion on a module was required to retape that module.

Performance of the triads was evaluated by having each student conduct an interview with a simulated client (drama and counselling students) prior to training (baseline), at midterm, and during the final week of classes. Dependent measures included the number of criterion behaviors emitted, percentage of responses coded inappropriate, ratings of overall skill level demonstrated in the videotaped probe interviews, amount of student time spent in training and taping, student ratings of satisfaction with their monitors, and with the individual modules.

Results and Discussion

The probe interviews were all rated at the end of the semester by the triad monitors. Individual responses were scored as either appropriate or inappropriate for each designated opportunity for the student therapist to emit a response. Monitors did not rate members of their own triads, and were blind to whether the probes were conducted at the beginning, middle, or end of the semester. Two raters scored for

reliability on one-third of all probe tapes. Reliability scores were calculated by dividing the number of opportunities scored the same by both raters divided by the total number of opportunities scored. These scores ranged from .75 to .93 with a mean of .85. Overall performance ratings correlated .63 between raters.

If learning had occurred, students were expected to increase the number of categories of responses emitted, decrease the percentage of responses scored inappropriate, and improve in overall ratings of performance. In fact, for the number of categories of responses emitted, the immediate feedback group averaged 14.8 for the baseline probe, 16 for the midterm probe, and 17 for the final probe compared to 14.6, 15.6, and 15.6 for the delayed feedback group. Neither the baseline to final difference nor the between group differences were significant. For percentage of inappropriate responses emitted, the immediate feedback group averaged 39%, 4%, and 4% for the three sequential probes. The delayed feedback group scored 38%, 5%, and 5% inappropriate responses respectively. There was a significant reduction in percent of responses scored inappropriate from baseline to final for both groups ($p < .01$). There was, in fact, a significant reduction ($p < .01$) from baseline to midterm, and a nonsignificant difference from midterm to final for both groups. These scores did not significantly differentiate between the two groups. Overall performance ratings were made on a seven point scale anchored with 1=exceptionally poor and 7=outstanding. The immediate feedback group was rated 2.5, 5.2, and 5.5 for the three sequential probe interviews as compared to the delayed feedback group's ratings of 3.4, 5.4, and 5.9 respectively. Again, baseline to final increases in ratings were significant ($p < .05$) for both groups, but the two groups did not differ from each other on any probe.

Time costs to the student, and consumer satisfaction were evaluated by module evaluation forms filled out by each student at the completion of each module. Students in the immediate feedback group spent an average of 2.9 hours per module, which was significantly less time than the 5.4 hours spent by students in the delayed feedback group ($p < .01$). Monitor usefulness was rated on a seven point scale with a rating of one indicating detrimental, and a rating of seven indicating very helpful. The immediate feedback group rated monitor usefulness 5.8, and the delayed feedback group gave a mean rating of 5.0. This difference is significant at the .05 level of confidence. In addition, ratings of module usefulness, on the same scale as above, were 6.0 for the immediate feedback group, and 4.2 for the delayed feedback group. This difference is significant at the .01 level of confidence.

Conclusions

As can be seen, while the performance and improvement ratings of both groups was comparable throughout the semester, the students in the immediate feedback group spent only slightly more than half of the time expended by the students in the delayed feedback group. Further, the immediate feedback group expressed greater satisfaction with both their monitors and the individual modules than the delayed feedback group. Thus, immediate feedback seems to benefit the student in terms of time and satisfaction at no additional cost in monitor time or skill improvement.

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